

>> BOBLITT-JOHNSON: Good afternoon. I'm Jennifer Boblitt-Johnson. I'm with Gateway Community and Technical College in northern Kentucky. We have a different setup. Again, you heard me talk earlier. And in northern Kentucky, we do a few different things, and one of the things that I'm really happy about is we assist students on their pathway to success in utilizing the wraparound approach to credential achievement. Our participants will be required to take a state or national certification exam. Case managers, along with our administrative staff, handle this setup for the exam. This is quite cumbersome for most students.

Not all of the 11 programs require certification exams for their employment; however with the HPOG encouragement for our students, we want them to help them stand out for the job market and have the capability and the capacity for more money on the hour for them. Specifically for farm techs, massage therapists, medical assistants, medical coders, nurse aids, these certifications are much more on the dollar hour.

Prior to the implementation of HPOG programming, Gateway did not encourage the Allied Health students to sit for certification exams. When HPOG programming started, we successfully made the case that certifications improve the employability, and the culture change started to exist at that point. Allied Health Division instructors started to build this into their syllabus as well. At that point, we have this heavy shift and a big push for the Allied Health Division Team, which is made up of 22 members, with 11 of them being HPOG staff. You saw a picture there. 22 of them are there, 11 of us being staff. It's kind of nice.

Our students are introduced, from the very beginning, to certification exams through our orientation, and it goes throughout our workshops as well. Case managers continue to emphasize the importance of their employment and the pay. Our Allied Health Resource Center offers students, throughout the year, tutoring as well. However, they offer specific sessions on testing and how to meet those goals as well.

As you can imagine, testing can cause quite a bit of anxiety, and our case managers root through how to overcome these anxieties with the students. They provide support, help them calm down any nerves prior to any exams, and how to be Zen if they need to be, how to lower the anxiety by doing practice exams, all different kinds of things that they need to do.

As with any group, there could be a length of time between finishing the class and setting up for and sitting for the exam. We keep our students engaged through practice exams and study groups. During exam days we arrive early. We do mandalas, which these are some mandalas here. We participate in deep breathing. We eat peppermints for brain stimulation, and we do different activities like soft music, meditation. The mandalas have been even proven to help reduce anxiety, and some of our students have gotten ten-points difference with doing some mandala work even.

The faculty divisions have been the big, big power play for us and have been very, very helpful. That has been the biggest support. If you can do that, that seems to be the biggest, is getting the buy-in from them. Utilizing the campus assessment centers has also been a big push for us

as well. Some of the stuck points have been keeping students engaged. When they're not sitting and active for the exam, once they've stopped their training, that's been troublesome for a lot of instructors. If you can get the instructors involved that's helpful. Other stuck points are, then, if you are living far away from the assessment center, and so we utilize getting the campus vans to travel to those sites. Other things have been the modalities. Not all students are comfortable taking the test on a computer, so getting practice tests for the computer have been helpful. So if you have those issues, I would suggest doing that.

The methods we're using to engage students have always been Facebook, e-mails, cards and letters, and then, like I said, engage them with other students. We bring in other students from previous testing times in helping them. Letters of encouragement, we do this a lot. We do about six letters a week, no lie. We do it a lot. Lots and lots of letters. We sit down with small letter parties and just write them and give them lots of encouragement. We heard you did a good job on your test. You know, congratulations. And they'll even post their letter on Facebook and say, "Look, I got a letter from HPOG." So we do a whole lot of letters of encouragement. It seems to help. They feel loved. They feel better.

And this is really is us. We sit together as a team and as a division of commencement, and we support our students year round, but at commencement it's there. And we are constantly celebrating their success. Their success is ours. So any time you can celebrate it, we do. That's where we are.